

By Commission Order No. 1999-499, dated July 13, 1999, the Commission ordered that Docket Nos. 1999-249-C and 1999-268-C be consolidated for purposes of hearing on these two dockets. Now with the requests for admission of additional parties to the proceeding on Docket No. 1999-249-C, it appears to the Commission that

consolidation of these two dockets for hearing is not possible. Therefore, the Commission finds that the hearing originally scheduled for Docket Nos. 1999-249-C and 1999-268-C should be bifurcated and that separate hearings should be conducted on each docket.

With this decision to split the hearings on these two dockets, the Commission orders that the scheduling dates contained in Order No. 1999-499 will continue as they relate to Docket No. 1999-268-C and that the hearing on Docket No. 1999-268-C will begin at **11:00 A.M. on Monday, September 20, 1999**. With regard to the Consumer Advocate's Petition to Intervene in Docket No. 1999-268-C, the Commission denies the request to be an intervenor in the proceeding, but will allow the Consumer Advocate to participate in Docket No. 1999-268-C as a participant. The Commission has previously held in arbitration cases under Section 251 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that the only parties to the proceeding should be the parties to the interconnection agreement. However, the Commission has allowed the Consumer Advocate to participate as a participant in the arbitration proceedings, and the Commission will allow the Consumer Advocate to participate as a participant in Docket No. 1999-268-C.

With the splitting of these dockets for hearing purposes, the Commission will hold in abeyance the arbitration issue related to unbundled network elements pending resolution of Docket No. 1999-249-C. Section 251(f)(2)(B) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires a state commission to act upon a petition filed under Section 251(f) within 180 days of receipt of the petition and further allows a state commission to suspend enforcement of a requirement of Section 251 until the state commission acts upon the petition. As Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. ("HTC") has filed a petition

under Section 251(f)(2) for suspension or modification of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Commission has the authority to, and does hereby, hold in abeyance the arbitration issue related to unbundled network elements pending resolution of HTC's petition under Section 251(f)(2) for suspension or modification of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in Docket No. 1999-249-C.

With regard to Docket No. 1999-249-C, the Commission accepts the Petitions to Intervene of GTE and the Consumer Advocate. A scheduling or prefile order will be issued at a later date when a hearing date is determined for Docket No. 1999-249-C.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The hearings for Docket Nos. 1999-249-C and 1999-268-C, previously consolidated for hearing purposes by Order No. 1999-499, dated July 13, 1999, are hereby bifurcated.
2. Docket No. 1999-268-C will proceed based upon the hearing date and scheduling dates contained in Order No. 1999-499.
3. The arbitration issue related to unbundled network elements is held in abeyance pending resolution of Docket No. 1999-249-C.

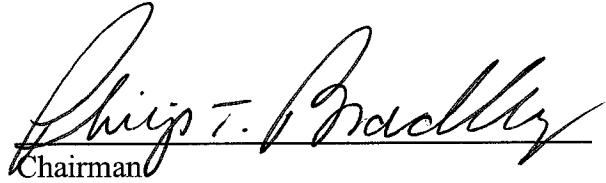
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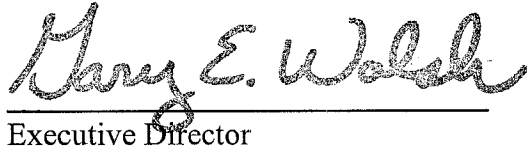
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4. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further Order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

  
Chairman

ATTEST:

  
Executive Director

(SEAL)